

Formation and Development of The Uzbek Folk Instruments Orchestra

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Received: 12 February 2025; **Accepted:** 13 March 2025; **Published:** 10 April 2025

Abstract: This article explores the historical and cultural processes that led to the formation and development of the Uzbek Folk Instruments Orchestra. It highlights the significant role of national traditions, musical heritage, and prominent composers and performers in shaping the orchestra. The study also discusses the evolution of orchestration techniques, the inclusion of various traditional instruments, and the integration of folk melodies into orchestral arrangements. Special attention is given to the influence of Soviet-era reforms and educational institutions in institutionalizing the orchestra. The article concludes by analyzing the modern state of Uzbek folk orchestras and their contribution to preserving and promoting the nation's musical identity.

Keywords: Central Asian Art, Hellenistic Influence, Sogdian Musical Culture, Terracotta Sculpture, Musical Instruments, Lute, Afrasiab Archaeology, Khwarezmian Art, Ancient Central Asian Music, Borbad, Tuproq-Qal'a Wall, Paintings, Musical Culture, Sculptures of Musicians, Sogdian Religious Rituals.

Introduction: The contemporary era is marked by an increasing interest in the history of human cultural heritage. Archaeological discoveries expand the boundaries of history, and researchers are delving deeper into the centuries-old past. Knowing the past not only shows the intellectual development of society but also helps in understanding the present time. Studying the historical memory, social, and spiritual experiences of past generations addresses the tasks of modern ideological patriotism and international education. Understanding the processes occurring in the national artistic cultures of Soviet Eastern republics and correctly evaluating new achievements in Soviet-era contemporary art are crucial to understanding which national traditions shape this new art and its connections to the legacies of past centuries.

Soviet archaeologists, historians, and art critics have created extensive literature illuminating the rich achievements of the visual arts, craftsmanship, and architecture in the multi-century cultures of the peoples of Central Asia. While the achievements in these areas are clearly documented, the situation is different in the field of music. Although there are sufficient foundations to recreate a full picture of past

musical life, this is an extremely complex task. In some aspects, it may not even be feasible because history has not preserved ancient music in its live form. Unlike works of visual art, musical compositions have disappeared, and they cannot be restored with any effort. This is likely the main reason why musicology lags behind other branches of art studies. While major research has been conducted on the literature, architecture, and visual arts of Central Asia, music-historical science is only beginning to take its first steps in the republics of this region. However, the discipline can already rely on a wealth of material from relevant fields during its formation process.

Valuable information can be found in the works of famous orientalists such as Ye.E. Bertels, A.N. Kadimirev, B.L. Riftin, and A.A. Semenov. New pages in the history of Central Asian musical culture were added by the discoveries of Soviet archaeologists: the Ayrtom and Termez archaeological expeditions (led by M.Ye. Masson), the Khorezm archaeology-ethnography expedition (S.P. Tolstov), the Tajikistan archaeology-ethnography expedition (A.M. Belenitsky, M.M. Dyakonov, A.Yu. Yakubovsky), and the Southern Turkmenistan complex expedition (M.Ye. Masson). The expeditions of the Hamza Institute of Art Studies under

the Ministry of Culture of the Uzbek SSR (led by G.A. Pugachenkova) made a significant contribution in this field. The terracotta figurines of musicians found in the ancient city of Samarkand — Afrasiab's city center — were thoroughly analyzed in the publications of K.V. Trever and V.A. Meshkeris. The archaeological works of R.L. Sadokov, dedicated to ancient Khorezm, are of particular importance in the music-historical context.

The scope of issues raised by these researchers is broad, and their factual material is diverse. However, this information is scattered across various specialized publications and often remains unnoticed by music historians. Given the task of creating a history of the musical culture of the peoples of Central Asia, there was a need to consolidate this information. As a step toward resolving this issue, studying certain aspects of musical-historical problems could be helpful. One such aspect is the historical development of musical instruments that have long existed in the Central Asian region.

Interest in studying musical instruments has significantly increased in recent years, especially in regions with ancient traditions of folk instrumental culture. It is known that the images of musical instruments found during archaeological excavations in the territory of our country are most common in Central Asia. Recent publications by Soviet Orientalist musicologists dedicate special attention to the study of musical instruments. This issue is multifaceted and can be examined both from the perspective of cultural heritage and the role and use of musical instruments in the modern life of the people. Detailed study of the technological features of widely distributed folk instruments, with the aim of improving them based on new requirements, can serve as an object for research.

As material culture products, musical instruments are also directly related to spiritual culture. Their structure and performance possibilities reflect the laws of musical thinking, as well as the aesthetic taste formed at a particular stage of society's development. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that musical instruments or their depictions preserved in material culture artifacts are often the most reliable, and sometimes the only, source of information about a society's musical life.

For researchers studying any type of artistic heritage of the peoples of Central Asia, determining the geographic boundaries of their work presents a particular challenge. The modern borders of the countries of the Near East were formed relatively recently. Throughout the long history of Central Asia, various state structures emerged in its territory, extending far beyond today's borders. This trend was

characteristic of ancient periods (Parthia, Sogdiana, Bactria, Khorezm) and continued in the medieval era. For example, during the 9th–10th centuries, the lands of present-day Iran and Afghanistan were under the rule of Bukhara. In the 12th century, Khorezm's possessions stretched as far as the northern regions of India; in the 14th century, the Great Timurids state, centered in Samarkand, arose from the ruins of the Mongol Empire. Political unifications have accelerated the exchange of artistic values. Poets, artists, and musicians were invited from one ruler's court to another, bringing with them their respective artistic styles. Established cultural connections led to the formation of art forms and genres common to different peoples.

It would be futile to attempt to determine which of the peoples of Central Asia had superiority in creating and developing particular types of musical instruments. The most perfect of these instruments are the result of centuries of development. Folk instrumental culture was already a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in ancient Central Asia, created through the efforts of numerous peoples.

If the history of Central Asian musical instruments cannot be studied independently of the cultural heritage of foreign Eastern countries, distinguishing the spread of these instruments within Central Asia, especially within the modern borders of the Soviet Eastern republics, is even more difficult. For example, some types of musical instruments are common to both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The main "dividing line" is even felt among musical instruments used by nomadic and settled populations within a single republic in the recent past. For instance, musical instruments used in certain rural areas of Uzbekistan are also found in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, where nomadic pastoralism was the main economic activity until the pre-revolutionary period.

Returning to the issue of geographic research scope, it is important to note that Central Asia mainly refers to the territories of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. However, when considering the musical instruments of these republics, the scope of their spread outside these borders should also be taken into account. For example, when studying musical instruments from the 14th–16th centuries, it was necessary to use not only Central Asian manuscripts but also data from Persian artistic miniatures. A similar approach was used when studying the works of medieval theorists: alongside the treatises of Central Asian thinkers, the research of several Persian scholars was also involved.

The history of world culture (including musical culture)

does not develop uniformly. In recent centuries, the development of musical culture in European countries has been so rapid that its achievements overshadow earlier stages of this field in European consciousness. Musicological literature in European languages during the first half of the 19th and 20th centuries was largely based on European musical norms, attributing universal significance to them. This "Eurocentrism" in many books about the history of world musical culture led to little attention being paid to the arts of Eastern peoples. In recent decades, new trends have begun to emerge. For contemporary musical avant-garde thinkers, attempting to contrast the East with the West has become characteristic, claiming that connections between the musical cultures of different continents are detrimental and lead to the distortion of national art forms in Asian and African countries.

Soviet musicologists, however, hold a fundamentally different position. As the experience of cultural construction in Soviet Eastern republics has shown, the exchange of artistic values does not diminish national wealth but enhances it. The experience of human history teaches us that no people has ever developed in isolation. One of the important tasks arising from this is to demonstrate that the history of world musical culture is the result of the joint activity of various peoples. The multifaceted connections between different peoples are reflected in the arts, enriching cultures that have diverse sources.

For ancient and early medieval periods, the depictions of musical instruments on stone, clay, silver objects, and wall paintings served as important sources. From the Timurids period to the 18th century, artistic miniatures were the main source of information. Additionally, the musical-theoretical sections of medieval encyclopedias (treatises dedicated to music) of the 9th–17th centuries are of great scholarly significance. Various literary sources were also widely used in research. While there are no special studies on the history of Central Asian musical instruments, some information can be found in travel descriptions, research on the history of related art forms, various monographs, collections, albums, and works dedicated to the artistic heritage of Central Asia and Iran by Soviet and foreign authors.

Central Asia has been a crucial link in the chain of highly developed ancient countries, often referred to as the "Central region" of the Old World (in the words of N.I. Konrad). This region not only includes Central Asia itself but also modern Afghanistan, northern India, Iran, the Caucasus, and several countries near the Mediterranean. Geographically "central," this area was also one of the main centers of the Old World politically and culturally. Most importantly, this is where the

"universal" — i.e., not local but world cultural centers — were formed.

This phenomenon is likely connected to the early and highly developed rise of art culture along the "Central region" of Central Asia. People in ancient Central Asia were already creating and striving for artistic expression early on. This is evident from the geometric shapes, animal and nomadic depictions on pottery, bronze, and stone objects — artifacts left by people living here 4-5 thousand years ago.

Little information has been preserved about the music of ancient Central Asian peoples. Greek and Roman writers mention that the Persians and Massagetae performed songs and dances during religious ceremonies. The Zoroastrian sacred book "Avesta," which contains the myths of the ancient peoples living between the Iranian Plateau and Central Asia, includes hymns (Gathas) sung by priests (magi). However, it is impossible to determine the melodies of these hymns today.

In the Examples of the Ancient Art of Central Asia (3rd century BC – 3rd century AD), including sculpture, wall paintings, and items made of clay and bone, a close fusion of local and Hellenistic traditions can be seen. In some cases, Hellenistic influence was so strong that it shaped not only the stylistic features of the works but also the images related to Greek mythology. In other cases, local traditions, primarily linked to the customs and beliefs of the indigenous peoples of Central Asia, were distinctly emphasized. It is noteworthy that in the most popular forms of art (for example, in coroplastic art), local traditions remained particularly strong. This situation, of course, was also related to the political situation. For instance, the art of Khwarezm, which preserved its political independence, was less influenced by Hellenistic art compared to the art of Parthia.

The data shows that the centers of musical culture were located in the territories of ancient states: in Sogdiana's Marakanda (ancient Samarkand), and in Parthia's Nisa. Additionally, on the right bank of Khwarezm, there was a complex of religious and palace buildings, and the cities of Bactria stood out with their rich cultural centers.

Since the late 20th century, archaeological excavations in Afrasiab and ongoing research have provided rich material. Labor instruments, various weapons, household and artistic items, and various coins indicate the highly developed craftsmanship and extensive trade connections between the peoples of Central Asia.

Among the finds, terracotta figures depicting musicians, warriors, and female musicians stand out. The numerous musicians reflect the special respect

that ancient sculptors had for the profession of musicians. This is not a coincidence and likely indicates that music played a significant role in the life of the Sogdians, participating in their religious rituals and folk festivals. The depiction of musicians in the monuments of ancient Central Asian art shows that they were valued as much as figures from Greek mythology or epic heroes.

The terracotta musicians are small sculptures, about 9-10 cm tall, made from fired clay. The back is flat, while the ancient side is sculpted. They were pressed into special molds and then hand-shaped before being fired. The clothing of these musicians is typical, consisting of a long free dress, trousers, and boots. Their faces are oval, with a broad forehead, almond-shaped eyes, distinct eyebrows, a small mouth, and a firm jaw, reflecting the ethnic type of the indigenous Sogdian population. Many sculptures have been damaged, and some have only fragments preserved. Most of the terracotta musicians date from the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD, but some sculptures date back to the 5th-7th centuries BC.

From the terracottas found in Afrasiab, it can be inferred that the favorite instrument of the Sogdians was the lute (lutnya). Many of the sculptures clearly depict this instrument. Various sizes and shapes of lutes exist, but their main features are consistent. We can see a well-known type of lute with a long body, short neck, and a head tilted backward. This type of instrument is called a "short lute" in musical studies (often just called lute) or "uda."

In ancient Central Asia, apart from Afrasiab, drum depictions in the shape of hourglasses are also found in Khwarezmian monuments. These are especially depicted in the 3rd-4th century wall paintings in the Tupraq-Qala Palace. Based on the clearer details in the Khwarezmian artist's drawing, the appearance of the Sogdian drum can be reconstructed, which was only generally depicted in the Afrasiab representation. The drum narrows from the middle, meaning its diameter is significantly smaller in the center compared to the edges. The construction and external appearance of the Sogdian drum might closely resemble the Khwarezmian drum.

It is likely that this drum, like the one in the wall painting of Tupraq-Qala, was played with both hands' fingers. Based on terracotta forms, Sogdian drums are depicted as being hung from a belt or mounted on a belt. If there were sometimes women among the musicians, the Sogdian drum, like in other Eastern countries, might have been used not only in military but also in religious ceremonies. In the poorly preserved terracotta from Afrasiab, a musician playing a musical

instrument resembling a mounted horseman is depicted. This description represents a rare instance of the described type of drum.

Speaking of drums and rituals, cymbals (struck musical instruments) are shown in many historical monuments, notably in a 6th century BC Assyrian painting. These cymbals resemble the orchestra cymbals from ancient times. They were likely used in religious rituals or ritual dances, a practice considered to have very ancient origins.

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